

BOOKS BY

ROBERT HOMAN

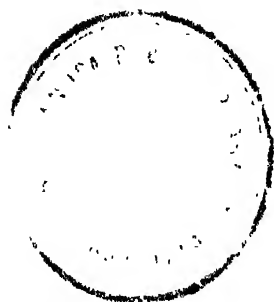
*A Matter of Duty*

*Dust Before The Wind*

*Crooked Hearts*

ROBERT HOMAN

# *Crooked Hearts*



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‘Thou wilt find, for the land that  
thou quittest, another but no  
soul wilt thou find to replace  
thine own.’

*VIth Voyage of Sinbad of  
the Sea*



# Uncle

ON THE ISLAND there is much to love and, when sober, I can love it. I love the gauntness of this defiant rock where guns point to sea as if the Corsairs still might come. I love the perfection, the crescent of the port; the houses above it, rising, white gravestones, to crowd the hill; the prancing bells that clang from every tower; the harsh, vindictive voices of the children; the stamp and stench of loaded mules that peer from shadows. I tell myself that I am in heaven and that I have earned it all. I cry 'My God! How you have earned it! You who have fought for King and Country; have worked your heart to bits in jungle and on ice-field; you who have watched the whales spout and the desert blaze with roses. You have seen and done enough for fifty men. Relax! Go slowly to your grave. The sun is yours, each day is yours – all yours!'

But each day dies and evening comes; the lights go on and the drink goes down and a blight comes over my soul and the bile begins to brew inside me. And I begin to dream of dead men, of faces round a fire. Then I hate the expatriates and the tourists. They become villains – creeping spirits who skulk round cafés – soft, arrogant, patronizing – larded with their swimmers' sun-tan. Harmless queers enrage me with their modulated voices and their intellectual shadow-boxing. With each drink my tolerance – the mark, they say, of civilization – grows less. I rant and rave. I curse them all. I cry: 'Why did you pick MY island to be your playground?